ITU Workshop on Countering and Combating Spam

8 July 2013  
Durban, South Africa

*Opening Address*

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Ladies and gentlemen

Colleagues and friends

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Bonjour et bienvenu

Good morning and welcome

I would like to thank the Republic of South Africa, Department of Communications for hosting the events this week, this workshop on spam today, tomorrow a workshop on e-waste, followed by a review of the outcome, and how to implement in Africa the decisions, of the World Telecommunication Standards Assembly (WTSA) and the World Conference on International Telecommunication (WCIT). I would like to thank Gift Buthelezi, Deputy Director of the Department of Communications for welcoming us here . It is a great pleasure to be back in the beautiful city of Durban, where we enjoyed a very productive preparatory meeting for the WTSA and the WCIT last year.

I would also like to thank the African Telecommunications Union for cooperating with ITU on this event, the Secretary-General Abdoulkarim Soumaila for being with us this morning, and Richard Hill for agreeing to be our moderator today.

I am pleased to see so many countries represented here. African countries are now very active in ITU and I am pleased to say especially the ITU-T standardization sector where we have seen more than 40 new countries participating since 2007. I am pleased to say we also have many universities joining ITU, including African universities, and especially in the ITU-T sector.

Spam is a major concern that, as we will hear later in the week, was one of the main issues discussed at the WTSA and the WCIT in Dubai. Since there is no recognised definition of SPAM, WCIT referred to it as “unsolicited bulk electronic communication”.

It has the effect of considerably reducing network capacity, and is therefore a particular concern in developing countries.

Spam can carry advertising, but also viruses, scams and other deceptive content.

And the cyber criminals are quick to appreciate the potential of a new technology to exploit and deceive users. They have little or no operating costs and it has been historically difficult to hold them to account.

ITU has dedicated itself to developing technical standards and best practices for countering spam since 2005.

WTSA-12 revised Resolution 52 on Countering and combating spam which recognises the "Declaration of Principles" of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

§ 37 says that: "Spam is a significant and growing problem for users, networks and the Internet as a whole. Spam and cybersecurity should be dealt with at appropriate national and international levels".

Furthermore, the WSIS "Plan of Action" states in § 12 that: "Confidence and security are among the main pillars of the information society” and calls for "appropriate action on spam at national and international levels".

WTSA Resolution 52 lays the foundations for the ITU-T study groups, in particular in Study Group 17, to study and accelerate standardization work on spam, and to address the existing and future threats within their remit and expertise.

This event today is an opportunity to review the outcomes of both the WTSA and the WCIT as they relate to spam and to investigate the subject further by examining it from the perspectives of governments, industry and users.

The revised International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs) adopted last December by WCIT has a new Article 7 which encourages Member States to cooperate together to take the necessary measures to prevent unsolicited bulk electronic communication (spam) and minimize its impact on international telecommunication services. Since Article 1.1 of the revised ITRs states that the Regulations do not address the content-related aspects of telecommunications, Article 7 can only be implemented using the counter SPAM techniques that do no rely on content filtering, such as the ITU-T X.1230/40 series of Recommendations, and corresponding informative Supplements.

However the lack of an agreed definition of spam, makes discussion of the topic difficult, as different countries have different concepts of the scope of the problem, and in particular different legal attitudes to privacy.

While there is never going to be a single solution to eradicate spam a combination of complementary approaches has proved to be successful. These will be explored during the workshop.

We will hear from government and industry on how to combat spam from regulatory, legal and technical perspectives. And we will see which standards and best practices are available.

It is the practice in ITU workshops to encourage participants to identify some actions that can be usefully taken to address the issue discussed. So I hope you will take this opportunity and I assure you we will follow up on your suggestions.

I wish you all an enjoyable and productive workshop.

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